

I am the future's child

I am 5 years old. I will be alive and well in 2070 (my children will see the 22nd century). Can you imagine what the world will be like for them?

Wherever I live and work I will certainly be mixing in a multi-national, multicultural and multi-faith setting; white people may be the ethnic minority. I will need to think about that when I prepare for a job.

During my lifetime, a planet-wide economic system will operate, controlled not so much by big nations as by big business networks and regional centres of trade like Singapore, Bangkok, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Buenos Aires...and Sydney; by the time I am 30 more people will live in Shanghai than in the whole of the South Pacific – including Australia and New Zealand.

The Asia Pacific will be a strong focus of my world: already nearly half a billion Chinese are under 25; Asia accounts for half the world's population (half of them are under 25). Consider it a growing market – those under 25's are my contemporaries.

My nationality will not matter that much because my world is smaller, people move about and most workplaces will be internationalized – my world is likely to be borderless.

This is a snapshot of my world:

Half a billion people in Asia are middle class like me and the same consumer patterns and attitudes; Car emissions are already changing our weather; Demand for petrol will go up in direct ratio to a decline in oil production and eventual exhaustion of fossil fuel.

1900 - 1.6 billion people on the planet; 2000 - 6 billion (but only 1 billion have three meals a day)

1950's only two megalopolis of 8 million people - London and New York; 2015 - about 34 such cities - half of them in Asia; By the time I am an adult the beginnings of a worldwide social welfare system will have begun - basic needs will be the target for everyone.

By the time I start work environmental responsibilities will be enforced internationally - if not the world will be threatened by 'green wars': access to water, topsoil, power, food; I will live in a 'smart home' wired to carry out electronic shopping, food preparation, household chores.

The patterns of the industrial economy will have disappeared by the time I start work – especially the 9-5 day, 5 day working week, salaried employment and regular holidays. The 'commodities' of trade in really prosperous nations will be technical skills, brain power and know-how.

By the time I am in my 20's Chinese and Indians will make up more than half the world's population; the world's largest Muslim nation is Indonesia (our closest neighbour): I will need to learn about Islam at school and also about Confucian societies which produce economic success and social cohesion; My schooling must teach me about living comfortably in a multicultural, multi national and multi faith world.

I will study Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Marsden, some Buddhist texts from India, novels from South Korea, the history of China and the politics of South America. Do you know what an international curriculum looks like and how it can be taught? My school says I need to be a global citizen. I know what that means. I hope you do.

Most of all I want to be wise over what to believe about me and my world. I want to know what the wisest people on earth believe. I want the world to be a beautiful place for my grandchildren.

My school teachers are very important to me because they tell me how to deal with the future - the long, long future.

Are you confident you can design a curriculum that will equip me to live in my world?

I am five years old and I am sitting in one of your classrooms today.

Adapted from *Creating a Future School*, Beare, Hedley, 2000 Routledge Falmer